

## **UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL**

### **Memórias – Preserving the Stories of Lowell's Portuguese Community**

#### **Oral History Interview with Patricia (Santos) Nickles, February 25, 2017**

##### **Biographical Note:**

Born in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1950; daughter of Ruth E. (Cassidy) and Charles R. Santos, Jr., (1923-1990); Ruth (Cassidy) Santos (b. 1923) was from an Irish-American, Catholic family; her father, was born in Lowell; her grandfather, Charles R. Santos, Sr., (1901-1964) was born in Lowell on Charles Street and was from a Portuguese family; his father (Nickle's great grandfather), Albert Santos, was born in the Azores, likely on the island of Graciosa, and married Aldina Silva; Charles, Sr., attended Lowell public schools, but left upon completing elementary school; he married Mary Farley (1903-1939), of Irish-Catholic heritage, worked a few years in a small foundry in the Ayer's City section of Lowell, purchased a house near the foundry on Marriner Street; and began a successful family-run wholesale meat company, Charles Santos & Sons, Inc. in the 1930s; one of seven children (two girls and five boys) Charles, Jr., was educated in Lowell's public schools, graduated from Lowell High School, worked briefly as a welder at the Charlestown (Massachusetts) Navy Yard, served in the U.S. Marine Corps in the South Pacific during WWII, returned to Lowell, graduated from Northeastern University, and worked for a while in the family meat business; Santos became involved in local Democratic politics in the 1950s, working on the campaign of attorney James L. O'Day for district attorney of Middlesex County and then for John F. Kennedy's congressional and presidential campaigns; he was appointed U.S. postmaster of Lowell in 1967 and served in this position for a about a dozen years.

##### **Scope and Contents:**

Interview conducted by local historian Mehmed Ali; focuses almost exclusively on family history, primarily on the Santos (paternal) branch, with some information on the Cassidy (maternal) family; includes the experiences of marriage across ethnic lines, education and occupational roles of family members in Lowell, the operation of small businesses, and local and state politics in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the John F. Kennedy congressional and presidential campaigns.

**INFORMANT: PATRICIA NICKLES**

**INTERVIEWER: MEHMED ALI**

**P=PATRICIA**

**A=ALI**

A: Okay, this is interview with Pat Santos Nickles on February 25, 2017. So Pat thanks for sharing some memories today.

P: Oh my pleasure.

A: So first, Pat, just a little bit about you. When and where were you born?

P: I was born Saint John's Hospital March 31, 1950, parents, Charles Santos, Ruth Cassidy Santos.

A: And where, which neighborhood did you grow up in?

P: Well, my father having been a World War II Marine Corps Veteran thought he was very fortunate to be able to call his first residence the housing project, red brick opposite the Olympia Restaurant and the Greek Church. I believe it was developed for veterans. He and my mother when they got married initially moved in with her family for a short time until, I don't know if it was a seniority list, or a lottery, but they felt very fortunate to get into veterans' housing, a lot of up and coming Lowellians there. Dr. Felix Sweeney was going to medical school at the time. Jim O'Day, who became District Attorney, he was in law school. He was very close with my father. They remained close friends for life. So a lot of very promising young people who made their mark in the history of this city lived there as well.

Now my parents were married five years before I was born. I lived in the housing project with them as an infant until I was eight months. My father, I believe I saw on the deed in the month of December of 1950 he had it in the works to build a house on a piece of land he obtained from his father on Marriner Street in Lowell, opposite the old Nickles' Dairy and Saint Patrick's Cemetery. It was right next to my grandfather Santos' home, the old family home, where all seven Santos children were born. Grandpa Santos [Charles R. Santos, Sr.], when he married his wife Mary Francis Farley, purchased that home. He was quite proud at such a young age to be able to purchase a home. I know my father was born when his mother was twenty and his father was twenty-two. So grandpa bought that house at a young age, very impressive when that was not the case once upon a time, all renters in this city, or people living together.

He chose the neighborhood because it was walking distance to the foundry [originally called the Eagle foundry and located in the Ayer's City section of Lowell]. And I believe the foundry was where manufactured parts for the mills were made. My grandfather Santos got the job because his older brother, I believe it was Tony Santos, his older brother Tony was a foreman. He helped my grandfather get employment as a molder. His brother Joe worked there. A lot of Portuguese were employed there.

And it was funny there was a big vacant lot of land. It's a shame it's all developed, because it was very country-like in that area for many, many years. It looked like a different world. But there was a vacant lot of land opposite my grandfather's family home and they always called it Woessner's Field, because the land belonged to a gentleman named Julius "Gus" Woessner. And that field was used for ice skating in the winter and baseball in the good weather. And I remember my dad telling me that the guys from the foundry would meet the guys from the Harvard Brewery next door and have a heck of a time playing baseball. People organized their own fun. They didn't need sponsors, they didn't need anyone. They did it themselves. And my father all his life was a baseball fanatic. It was funny he didn't like to sit and watch the game for hours, but he went out and played and it all started there. So (--)

A: Let me ask (--)

P: Yes.

A: Let me ask you, your grandfather Santos, now was he an immigrant to the city, or was he born here?

P: His family to the best of our knowledge was from the island of Graciosa. I'm sure I'm not pronouncing it correctly, in the Azores. Some of his siblings were born there, but my grandfather [Charles R. Santos, Sr.], being younger was born when they reached Lowell, and he was born on Charles Street in back of where there had been an old Zayre's for many, many years. I lose track of what's there now. They were right near the classic Back Central Street area with the Portuguese near Barry's Bakery, near Saint Anthony's Church, and that's where he was born. And for reasons unbeknownst to this certain stage in his life his father split from his mother. They call it a "poor man's divorce." We have no idea what the circumstances were that caused it, but the father took a few of the kids with him, left most of them with my Portuguese great-grandmother, and he brought the kids to New Bedford where he obtained employment and took care of them in New Bedford.

My grandmother, the lawn mowers, everything they work out of that building, there's a cemetery gate right there and a little street that if someone didn't describe it you'd never know, Court Street, and that is where my great grandmother moved with the kids.

A: Including your grandfather?

P: Including my grandfather. He was always with her. There were still a good number of siblings. His brother Tony, Joe, his sisters Jennie and Margaret were there. He also had a sister Sarah and Mary, brother Manuel, but they were in New Bedford. They were the ones who went to New Bedford. So it divided in two places.

The grandmother, from the stories I heard about her was a force to be reckoned with. She was a tiny woman, broken English, she ran a little grocery store.

A: This would be your great-grandmother?

P: Great-grandmother, I'm sorry, my father's grandmother, my great-grandmother; debate about the correct way to pronounce her name. Some people said Albina. My aunt said Alvina, with a v, Alvina. And it's amazing to hear her described as wearing a long dress and an apron, and a colonial dust cap, but she wore a colonial dust cap and she farmed a piece of Woessner's field that I had described earlier, the land opposite my grandpa's house on Marriner Street. She actually farmed part of that field. I imagine she paid Julius Woessner a little bit of a fee. I don't know if she paid him in vegetables, money, but she also made homemade pies, sold them from her store. She, on her land, also raised some livestock, chickens and pigs. You could do that in Lowell then. And I remember my grandfather talking about how she would personally bring her pigs to the butcher. They would be slaughtered and then he would have her come back at a certain date and he would give her the meat from the slaughtered pigs. And she would take the

meat home and make homemade Portuguese linguisa. So that takes a tough lady to look the pig right eye knowing what was going to happen, but I guess being that plucky helped her survive.

One of my favorite stories made her sound a little bit, you know, shady, but it was pervasive. Relatives aren't fun unless they're a little shady. But my Aunt Margaret Santos, my grandfather's sister, Margaret, one amazing woman, a dynamo. She told me about an awful experience she had with my great grandmother. This was when Margaret was about eighteen. Prohibition was in full force. I think eight out of ten people in Lowell brewed their own, had their own moonshine, and great grandmother Santos no exception. And Margaret said right in front of me, she'd show me how to do it in the bathtub, the bathtub gin, the coloring. She knew just how to do it. There was also a little creek. It's no longer there, but a little creek that ran through their property, and to hide it from police raids, and they did have police raids for this sort of thing, she would put it in bottles in a box with a rope and she would sink it right into the creek with some bushes hiding the rope. And they had an idea when the police would be around. And then she'd just pull it out as needed. So there was a whole system in place. Well Margaret told me one time when Margaret was eighteen somehow, somehow great grandmother Santos got nabbed, and Margaret accompanied her to court. Now Margaret said even at age eighteen she picked up the vibes that the judge was sympathetic to this poor little Portuguese woman struggling to keep her family fed and a roof over their head and that sort of thing, and he gave great grandmother Santos a lecture on how it's not legal and whatever else goes with a good lecture about not doing the right thing.

Now I don't attempt to speak for all Portuguese, because I don't know how the culture varies. I can only speak for my own family, but my own family were quite cards on the table with what they had to say. They did not mince words, and they looked at it as a virtue. Why wouldn't you want to hear it straight? Why wouldn't you not want an honest statement? So as the judge was winding up his lecture he was finishing off by saying, "So now that you know, and I'm sure that you know better now, if you can tell me honestly you will never do this again," and Margaret began to breathe a sigh of relief thinking that all was going to go well. And great grandmother Santos kicked up her heels and she said, "I've got all these mouths to feed. If I have to do this again to feed my children I'll do this again!" And Margaret said she saw the judge just sink in his chair. This is not what he expected and he gave her the gentlest fine he possibly could and a lot of reprimand. And Margaret said she still knew that he was being so humane under the circumstances, but she said, "I thought I was going to die." [Both laugh] But this, this seemed to be an example. And again I don't know how the culture might have been different among families, but I get a sense that there was a lot of this kind of (--) My grandfather was certainly, we have more funny stories about him because he said it the way he saw it and didn't see where there was any problem being that way.

A: Where was her store at? Do you know?

P: Yah, her store, it was later called Houde's Variety. Her daughter Margaret took it over and married Lew Houde, Lewellyn Houde, Lew Houde, but Margaret ran the store. And the store, I would describe it best as being on the corner of Court Street and Plain Street. Plain Street runs right down to the cemetery area and then becomes Court Street. Court Street will run onto Manchester. The building is still there and coincidentally my cousin Kenny Santos, who is

single, lives there. He just has converted it into a residence for himself. I believe his brother is living in part of the building, which is a separate kind of unit. Kenny did rent that for a while, but his brother is there now. Funny, still thinking of Santos' there, but if you look at the structure of the building you can see how the front would have accommodated big store glass windows and yah, but it's still, the building is still there.

A: Now do you think she sold her illegal bootleg stuff out of the store?

P: Ah, no. I think it was a private thing from the house. I think the word (--) The word was out from whom you could get your moonshine. My mother told me a story. She was from Crosby Street in the flats, an Irish family. One of her best friends was a Greek girl. And she would go to her little friend's house to play and it was not unusual for the parents in the winter to give them bottles to go hide in snowbanks. And my mother just looked at it as a playful activity. And the kids would do that for the adults. And then all of a sudden they'd tell them to go get a nice cold bottle and they'd see them exchanging it for some cash. And this went on all over during Prohibition. No one really went dry. [Laughs]

A: That's funny huh.

P: Yah, very common in Lowell.

A: What else can you tell us about your great grandmother? Did she ever remarry?

P: Oh God, no, no.

A: No?

P: No, no, just there's something about when you have a lot of kids. I get the feeling that she was a feisty little thing too. She (--) I think if any man in her life she would have to be the boss from what stories I heard, but she was a survivor and a trooper. And I think the whole family, they had a lot of laughs about her, but they were very impressed with her natural intelligence and energy, and ability to survive.

One of the things that the family talked about, a little point in history, the 1918 influenza epidemic. And my grandfather said that as a little boy he said the hearses were going up and down Gorham Street to the cemeteries like it was a bad dream. And it touched the Santos family. It touched the family of my great grandmother. She had a little girl named Emma, eleven years old, and Emma fell sick and died shortly after. She died I believe it was around Christmastime, and 1918, the influenza epidemic.

And I can remember my father telling me a story that his father told him. My grandfather Santos, in his drawer on Marriner Street, the bedroom, in his bedroom draw he had armbands, because once upon a time men's shirts were all made with the same sleeve length. Now the Santos' were quite short. So they were in trouble for sleeve length and that's why they had armbands. They would just sort of bloused them up and have these guarded type bands that once you put your jacket on you were in business, because you just saw a little of the cuff, very

common, very popular. Well my father asked his father, “What are those dad?” And he said, “Oh those.” And he explained as I just explained. And my father said, “Well you don’t need those anymore dad. They, you know, that’s not a problem anymore with shirts.” He said, “Well I just wanted to keep them because they were a Christmas gift from my little sister Emma who died when she was eleven.” So there’s something we all know, that when you lose someone you love it never goes away. There’s always something there. So that was a family story that was a little piece of a larger history.

And my great grandmother Santos, she was only about 53, 54 when she was killed in a car crash.

A: What happened?

P: North Chelmsford. No, pardon me. I’m not correct, near North Billerica, East Chelmsford, near the Baptist Pond area.

A: Okay.

P: Okay. Her daughter Mary was learning to drive. I don’t know who was in the car beside Mary and the great grandmother. I don’t know if anyone else was, but Mary was practicing driving. The car went off the road and went into the water. Mary survived. The grandmother drowned, the great grandmother drowned.

A: Oh.

P: The great Portuguese grandmother at an early age in her, about 53, 54 she died. It was something that haunted Mary all her life, all her life it was, which is understandable that it would. That was a terrible thing. And that’s how they lost her. But she was quite a trooper and her family was very close. They all worked hard. They all shared, very giving. I read the book from the [Lowell] Historical Society, very thin book. *Comunidade* if I’m saying it correctly? And the family showed all the characteristics described of the Portuguese people in *Comunidade*. They were very proud. They would never think of taking assistance. They would pool what they had. I thought it was interesting in *Comunidade* it mentioned that they tried to not all work in the same place. Now we had a cluster of Santos’ for a while in the foundry, but overall they would think to have other members of the family do other kinds of works in case someone got fired, in case there was a strike and the Portuguese would strike. In other words, don’t put all your eggs in one basket. They’d always be somebody in the family employed. So if you lost out the family would go on because they shared as a community. But they were very, very proud and you know, don’t mention assistance and they were independent. Worked hard, didn’t complain, but weren’t doormats either. If they had to strike they would do it, and they would be supported by family members who worked elsewhere. So they did line up with that description.

A: Yah. When your great grandmother was killed in the accident were their kids still fairly young?

P: No, they were more grown up and independent. She didn’t (A: Okay), yah, she didn’t leave little children. Yah, they were pretty grown up and independent at that point.

A: So tell us a little bit more about your grandfather. He went to Lowell schools?

P: Elementary. My father (--)

A: Okay. And where would they go to elementary school back then? Do you know?

P: Well my father's father, because he grew up, he was a little boy on Court Street, he was born on Charles Street, but he grew up on Court Street near the cemetery, where the cemetery workers are, that end. He, for elementary school, went to the London Street School.

A: Okay.

P: And I remember for the Portuguese exhibit [sponsored by the Saab Center for Portuguese Studies, University of Massachusetts Lowell] contributing a photo of Miss Haggerty's third grade class. And my grandfather was way in the back, little, little boy in a plaid shirt in that photo. So as far as we know that's where he went to school. And for a while he had to do a little bit of child labor work in the mill.

A: Did he?

P: For a while with his mother. His mother did some work in the mill and he did some work with her.

A: Do you know which mill they worked in?

P: I never heard the name of the mill, just one of the mills in Lowell. You have to assume it was a place they could walk to, you know, without a lot of problems. That was for a certain period of time. And then his brother Tony who was foreman at the foundry got him a job as a molder.

My grandfather also, how he transitioned into it I don't know, but he also got work in Saunder's Market, which would have been where the old Saint Peter's parish was on Gorham Street, the housing project area. (A: Umhm) There was a Saunder's Market and he was put in charge of the meat department there. And he had a lot of, of course his mother had a little grocery store and he had a lot of interaction with the people in that business. And he was very thrifty with his money and before you knew it he was setting himself up with his own wholesale meat business with slaughter house, abattoir as they called it, slaughter house in Tewksbury, but the big business was on the corner of King and Jackson off the Lord Overpass.

A: So did he own the land in Tewksbury as well as on King Street and Jackson Street?

P: Yes, yes, yes, yup.

A: Okay. And where was the slaughter house in Tewksbury?

P: Trull Road.

A: Okay.

P: So if you go down Andover and you take one of those rights into Tewksbury, right on the Lowell/Tewksbury line almost, it brings you into a very woodsy, swampy kind of area. You could almost smell the swamp as you get close to it and that's where the slaughter house was.

A: Okay.

P: And (--)

A: And what year is this when he first opened?

P: I'm thinking of the 1930s, (A: Okay) maybe mid.

A: So right during the depression he starts to open a business.

P: Yah, and my father said, you know, he said, "It was just amazing, we just never suffered during the depression." Here was this little man who stood, my grandpa was 5 foot-one, and he wore a big Stetson hat and he always had a big cigar in his mouth. No nonsense. You wouldn't think a guy that little could scare people, but you didn't mess with him. And my father just had more funny stories about this little guy coming into the room and everybody just stepped double time, you know, to do for him and pick up the pace at work and everything else. He was a comic character, but a very, very admirable human being in so many ways. But during the depression my father said, seven kids, "We went to school with kids who rolled up newspapers to fill in holes in the soles of their shoes. We had kids who would watch other kids eating an apple at recess and they'd put their index finger up and say, checks, checks," meaning when you get to the core can I have it.

A: Checks?

P: Checks. That was an expression my father said the kids would say because they were in such want that they were more than happy to take your leftover apple at the core and eat around it, whatever. He said it was just unbelievable, unbelievable what it was like with so many kids you went to school with. But he said, "I always, our family, everyone had decent shoes, decent clothes, no one was hungry." And the frosting on the cake, he had a very doting Irish mother. And his number one son, he might as well have been Prince Charles. She doted on him so much. Her kids had dancing lessons, music lessons. The two youngest ones had ponies. And when kids took dancing lessons they had recitals. So that was money for costumes when other kids were lucky to have a coat to go to school with. So not to say that they were rich, but they were in very good shape for a family during the depression. And again, it all goes back to this five foot-one guy with an elementary school education, but he had so much common sense, so much natural intelligence. He was so sound in his judgement about things, cards on the table honesty, no nonsense. Don't give him a lot of bologna, he's not listening to it. Cut and dry, and he honored his family. He honored, he was devoted to his wife and devoted to his kids, but he didn't take any bologne out of his kids either. It all worked. He turned out a great family.



A: So he only did elementary school.

P: Yup!

A: And nothing further.

P: Correct.

A: Now were any of his siblings go to parochial school?

P: No.

A: No, okay.

P: No, they all went to Lowell public school. (A: Okay) I don't think any graduated. None graduated from high school.

A: None.

P: None.

A: Okay.

P: Nope. Nope, and I really question, I really question if any graduated from junior high, but they were all smart and successful.

A: Yah. So what's your grandfather's name again?

P: Charles like my father.

A: Yah. So Charles started on his own. Were any of his brothers involved in the business to begin with?

P: No. Nope. (A: Okay) Nope, he was the only brother who went into the meat. The others were in the foundry.

A: In the foundry, okay.

P: Yah, and to the best of my knowledge that's, that was what they did. And it seemed to me, I heard that now and then Tony would get little part time jobs. For example if the carnival came to Lowell he'd manage to get a little bit of work here, and little bit of work there for some extras, but the foundry was where the other ones were. But he was, you know, unique that way in how he on his own just went out and did what he did. And it's funny, my father told me a story about how, just an example of my grandfather's very no-nonsense, straightforward approach toward life. My father said when, he said I remember when I was twelve years old my father brought me

to Saunder's Market where he was in charge of the meat department, and he said to me, he spoke to the gentleman who owned the market, Mr. Saunders, and I guess that was his name. And the next thing you know, he said my father told me, "Sit down." Portuguese fathers didn't explain themselves. If they said, "sit," you sat. So he said, "Sit down there." So my father sat in front of the cash register. Well my grandfather with the elementary school education gave him this blitz of a mathematics course on making change. And he said, "That's your new job. Sit there. You're the cashier." [Laughs]

A: So your father started at Saunder's?

P: As cashier.

A: Okay. Wow.

P: And his father gave him a lesson in making change. And my father said, he said, "boy I learned to be very quick with math in a hurry." You know, he says, "Here I am twelve years old and I'm thinking (--)" Of course you think of kids at markets today where you give them the larger coin and they don't know what to give you back, you know. He said, "Maybe if they all had my father for a math teacher they'd be okay." But my grandfather was, my father said he marveled. My grandfather would take the beef truck to the Brighton stockyards outside of Boston, Brighton. There were trains that came in, you know, cattle cars. And my father would go along with him, and his in-law uncle, my Aunt Margaret's husband Lew Houde, thus Houde's Variety where Margaret took over, they would go to Boston, they would go to Brighton and my father said he remembers the cattle coming off the cattle cars. And my grandfather would just scan a herd of cattle and he could come up a number telling you how much fat waste you were looking at, how much prime he could expect, and but my father said it was mind boggling how on target he was with his estimations. So he just had a knack for math. At night sometime he'd be sitting up in bed with his pillows propped up, my grandfather Santos, and they'd be a little light over his bed, a little reading light. (A: Umhm) And my father said he would be reading a book on business law, and now and then he'd call someone in. He'd call someone in to help him pronounce a word so he could talk to the lawyers about business law. So he was always developing himself.

A: Hm, interesting.

P: When Kennedy was President, when he got elected President my father said my grandfather, almost his first reaction, first of all, "Oh Kennedy got elected. Good. We're increasing the supply of hamburg because that's his favorite sandwich, the hamburger." And my father said he was right. We couldn't keep the hamburg in, because he was the in thing. Whatever was Kennedy, people wanted. He said we went through a big hamburger phase, but my grandfather had that business sense. So, so many stories, little ones, not earth shaking at lot of them, but so many funny little stories to tell about him.

A: Yah, well keep sharing some stories.

P: Oh, okay. Well give me a hint. What else should I think about?

A: Tell us more about the business. What about some stories about the business. The business grew over time right?

P: Yah, it was a very, very arduous business. It was very, very, very difficult. My uncles just, I won't even, I won't even get into the subject of slaughtering animals, but my Uncle Roger who had, they all had a marvelous sense of humor. They were the funniest, funniest group of men my father and my uncles. You wonder how because of with my uncles doing the slaughtering, particularly Roger, how they could keep the personalities that they had. But Roger was involved with slaughtering about thirty cows a day and it was a horrible, horrible thing to do. And you certainly had to get into a certain frame of mind, but they managed to kind of come up with their own funny stories, their own crazy little gags that they played on each other. And mind control and attitude and they just got through it. My father who ran the business end had a deal with customers that in some cases you wouldn't believe.

One time he had to go downtown Lowell to collect. There were too many people who didn't want to pay their bills, and this would certainly take toll on business. That essentially is why in the later part of the [19]70s the business really started to go under. The economy was terrible. We were going through a terrible economy. And all of these little restaurants in the city and diners were going out of business and they would pack up and leave, and "stiff" the business, you know, they just would not pay their bills. And it was just taking a toll on things. But my father had to collect from someone with a restaurant somewhere near city hall. I won't give you details about the owner. With my luck their relatives would hear and I'd be in trouble, and get sued, and whatever. [A: Chuckles] But there was someone with a restaurant near city hall. And it was wintertime my father said, and the guy was very belligerent when my father came in to have him pay the bill. And they exchanged a few words, the guy being the more hostile one, but they exchanged a few words and the guy ended up chasing my father out wielding a knife at my father. And my father said he had to jump over a big snowbank and roll away to escape. There was a lot that went with running a business like that.

And then my father told me stories about seeing very heartbreaking things. One time he had to go to a woman's house to collect and she was running up all kinds of bills and not paying them. And when he got into the house, there these little kids were sitting on the floor and she started to cry. And she opened her refrigerator and it was empty. And my father was so upset he opened his wallet and ended up giving her a good amount of money to go grocery shopping. And we laugh because well my grandfather wanted to know where the money was. And he shared the story. My grandfather didn't say anything. And then after when he left the room my grandfather looked at his other sons and he says, "We're not sending him out to collect anymore." [Both laughs]

A: Too much of a softy, right?

P: Yah! But I think my grandfather understood. It was just a way of kind of blowing off the situation.

A: So the Santos, what was it called?

P: Charles Santos and Sons Wholesale Meats.

A: Okay.

P: Incorporated. (A: Yah) Yup.

A: So they sold to restaurants.

P: Yes they did. Oh, and they included provisions. So the restaurant part of it made me think of the provisions. You would see these gigantic jars of mayonnaise, relish, mustard, ketchup, you know, things that restaurants would routinely use.

A: Umhm. Umhm. And so now would they do things like process hamburg, or?

P: Yah. They, the slaughter house would provide the raw meat.

A: Yah, and then it was brought to King Street where it was processed down to different cuts.

P: Yah, on the, again it was on the corner of King and Jackson. As you look at the Jackson Street side of the business is my grandfather's building touched the very high building next to it. That was the side that had massive refrigerators, and the beef would be hung in those massive refrigerators. And I can remember my uncles in the white coats going in to the refrigerator shouldering huge, huge pieces of beef. They would bring it to a cutting table in the next room where they had the big tools to cut it up. And there was also a grinder. So after the beef was cut, if it was going to be hamburg they would put it in the grinder next to, it looked like a gigantic butcher block table where they cut. They'd put it in the grinder, a big role of white papers to roll it up. And then you'd go through a door to the office area. The public could come in to the office area. The guys at the desk were separated from the entering public by kind of like an island counter. So the customers would be on one side of the island counter and the guys at the desks would be on the other side, the business part of it. And the people at the counter would just simply say, "I would like to pick up five pounds of hamburg," and you know, someone would go in, let them know. They'd do all the cutting, grinding and then they'd bring it right out to the counter. Sometime they'd come in to pick up boxes of hotdogs. Very popular were what they called the jack pack steaks, absolutely beautiful steaks, multiple steaks in big boxes. They were very popular with restaurants and people who wanted to throw very, very good parties. They were wonderful.

A: Now those steaks, were those cut on site or were they refrigerated or frozen and brought in?

P: Ah, I just know they were fresh. They were not, they had not been frozen.

A: Okay.

P: They were something that obviously you kept them chilled. People did not wait for steaks to be cut up. They were, they were cut up and waiting, but not you know, in the refrigerator but not frozen.

A: And the hotdogs made on site, or made somewhere else?

P: I have to think about that. I have to think about where the dogs were made. I'm not quite sure.

A: That's fine. That's fine.

P: I'm not quite sure.

A: So they had both retail and wholesale essentially.

P: Yes. Yup they did.

A: Okay.

P: No actually I take that back. Everything was wholesale even to the public. In other words, you could be Mrs. Jones, housewife, no career, come in, get wholesale meat at the counter. So you would pay the lower price for going in there.

A: Okay, okay.

P: And it was interesting because over the years, especially when you're a Lowellian years go by and you're always connecting with other Lowellians, okay, I can think of different people who were mothers of very large families who made it their business to go there once a week, because they knew they had to spend, they had to buy a lot to feed their family and they would get a very good break on that part of their groceries to get their meat there.

A: What was the competition for wholesale meats in Lowell?

P: Oh, I'd have to think about that. I think (--)

A: And it might have changed over time right?

P: Yah, there's one in Centralville, Lowell Provision.

A: Okay, yup.

P: Lowell Provision.

A: So, and they did the big, bring in the cattle and do it somewhere?

P: I'm not sure. I'm not sure how they operated. I just knew they were there. And I don't know who else besides Lowell Provision. I always remember hearing the stories of the DeMoulas Brothers getting started in the Greek Acre when they had that little market and they bought all their meat from my grandfather Santos. And that's how my father became friendly with, particularly, Mike DeMoulas; he was very friendly with [him]. But he enjoyed the DeMoulas Brothers. He admired them with their work ethic and their family. And I can also remember my father coming home one time, I think I was in my early teens, he came home one time for lunch and he was so excited saying he was just talking to Mike DeMoulas and they were planning the most enormous supermarket we've ever seen in the area on Chelmsford Street. And he said, boy they're taking such a big gamble but if they win, oh, they're going to have it made. They're going to be right up there. And I can just remember that whole conversation going on, and this is when we lived in our little house on the corner of Marriner Street and Boston Road.

Well I can remember one night when I was a kid I saw in the distance in the area of, in the direction of Chelmsford, the Highlands and Chelmsford, I saw all these spot lights wavering back and forth in the sky. And it was related to the grand opening of the DeMoulas on 110. Yah, I can remember that as a kid. And my father's words came back to me, because it might have been a big gamble, but boy that just launched them after that.

A: That's for sure.

P: But that (--) One of the many qualities I always admired in my father was he didn't understand the meaning of jealousy. If something wonderful happened to anybody you would think it was happening to my father. He was so happy for anyone who experienced success or great luck in life. And he was so excited for the family.

Also Eddie LeLacheur who became our state rep, he was our neighbor on Marriner Street, lived on the other side of my grandfather's house. And he also bought his meat from my grandfather when he had Stone Pine Market on Gorham Street.

A: Okay, so not only restaurants and housewives, but also the little markets across the city?

P: Oh yah, yup. Yup, all little markets, yup. Some barrooms too that had burgers. Every once in a while you could go in to a local barroom and have a burger and such business came from them as well, a lot of small, smaller places.

A: Okay.

P: Smaller, larger, yup, all over the city.

A: Did your father have any other stories to share about the DeMoulas'?

P: Oh, let me see, just references to being on certain boards with them, different things in the city.

A: Did your grandfather, and your father and uncle sell lamb?

P: Land?

A: Lamb.

P: Oh lamb, yes.

A: They did.

P: Yes.

A: And did DeMoulas buy from, from them?

P: Oh yah, yes they did, all their meat. Whatever meat you wanted they would buy it from my grandfather, yup.

A: Okay. Tell us about your grandmother (P: The Irish?) who was not, was not Portuguese right?

P: Oh yah. Well what I found very interesting about the Portuguese I knew, my family and the Portuguese they were related to, unlike some other ethnic groups in the city who were very, very, very close with their own, almost like a little wall around their culture, the Portuguese were close, but they were very receptive to other cultures, other people. They were concerned about your being upright, hard-working, and commonsensical. They didn't have a lot of patience for nonsense. And if you appeared to be a solid commonsensical person with values it really didn't matter what ethnicity. I think the Portuguese women were a little partial to Catholic, but even, even that was not as intense as you might think.

Now my grandfather's sister Margaret, when she married Lew Houde, Lew Houde was Protestant, okay. And Lew Houde worked at Santos and Sons for my grandfather and they got along very well.

A: Which church was he part of? Do you remember?

P: I don't know. I think he was a Protestant who didn't go to church. I think he was just not a religious, good man, but not a religious person.

A: Sure, yah.

P: My grand, actually my grandfather, even though he was very good to Father [Rev. John F.] deSilva at St. Anthony's, he, he was not all wrapped up with religion. He had a sense of the Supreme Being, and the right thing to do, but he, he just wasn't all wrapped up in religion. He was just hard working, family, kind of bringing it to life, but he did, he did meet at a young age. As I said, he was twenty-two when he was a father. His wife was twenty when my mother, my father was born. So he met the love of his life young, Irish girl, lovely family, the Farleys of Centralville. They were just two young people who clicked. I didn't hear of any problems from

the Portuguese side. I remember when my father was going out with my mother, they all doted on my father so much I don't think he could do anything wrong. And my mother said she was just amazed when she met the family for the first time. She was amazed at how delightful they were and how good they were to her immediately. They were so welcoming, and they made her feel like she was something extra special because she was my father's girl.

A Story (--)

A: And she's Irish as well?

P: My mother is Irish as well, yah. A story that always touched my heart, my grandfather Santos, his sister Margaret who doted so much on my father, one time he visited her when he was on leave from the Marines and he showed up in his green uniform. And he rang the bell expecting her to be delirious with joy to have this surprise visit. And she opened the door and she just hesitated and looked at him and her face dropped. And his face dropped. He said, "Margaret, I thought you'd be happy to see me. You don't look happy to see me?" She said, they always called him Sonny so as not to confuse him with his father Charles. She said, "Well Sonny, I keep telling all my neighbors how you're a Marine." She was so impressed with that. She said, "But you don't have the beautiful uniform on." He, "Oh, oh, Aunt Margaret, he said, you know, the dress uniform, you know you have to, you have to buy those yourself during the war and that's a lot of money and you know, I'm a little tight and every (--)" She said, "Is that right? Is that right?" Well they had a nice visit. He went back, time went by. Many months went by. He went to her house again to visit her. She told him to come in. She said, "I have a present for you." He opened the box and it was his Marine Blues that she went, she went, she made sure his sisters got clothes at home to take measurements from and she took all the steps so that she could give him his Marine Blues, because that meant so much to her. And she said, "When you come to visit me I want to show you to my friends, and I want you to wear that uniform." And he got married in that uniform.

A: Oh terrific.

P: So I thought, my God, what special people to care that much. Yah, I thought that was really an amazing story.

A: Now where did your grandparents meet? Do you know?

P: They were introduced by a young man, everybody called him O'B, as in O'Brien. And I don't know what his first name was.

A: Okay.

P: I just heard the name O'B flip. Now being Irish he was probably from Centralville, and knew her from Centralville. And my father said they were at a dance and O'B introduced them. And my grandfather started courting her. And there were about fourteen Farleys. She was about one of fourteen, the Farleys in Centralville.



A: Any relation to Leo Farley who was the mayor?

P: No. (A: Okay) No. Not to my knowledge. I don't know if there's a distant cousin (A: Yah, cousin or whatever) or something that I missed out on knowing. Strange coincidence, my husband's middle name is Murphy, William Murphy Nickles. Murphy would have been his mother's maiden name, okay. Now his mother's family, the Murphys, lived right around the corner from the Farleys in Centralville. And Bill's mother, who was Margaret Murphy, was best friends with my father's Aunt Rita Farley. Also Bill's mother's sister Mae was best friends with Helen Farley, and they interacted and they were close, and they had a wonderful relationship. And then life changes, people move. And then when I met Bill going into my senior year of college, we had the same summer job, Title I in Lowell, a little bit of teaching with the kids. When we met, I think by our second conversation we felt like we had known each other for years, because he brought the story home to his mother. "Well I met this Pat Santos." And oh, "Well I know who the Santos' are, and I lived next to the Farleys. And I used to see her grandmother all the time." And it just went on forever. So it was, so I ended up virtually marrying the boy next store. Both Highland kids, we never met, but all the connections were there.

But no, it's funny I think of my father's sister Shirley who married Ed Silva from Winthrop Ave. in Lowell, Silva Wallpaper and Paint.

A: Okay.

P: His father was Manuel and his mother Margaret. Margaret, I would run out of ways to compliment her. She has to be one of the most, had to have been one of the most beautiful human beings I ever met. Both of them, I'm trying to think. Yah, the father was very interested in having the boys work in the business. That was more the mindset then of the Portuguese father. If I had a business why would you really want to go to college when you could work in this business that I set up for you? My grandfather was of that frame of mind. My father, what drove him to further educate himself and go to North Eastern was the GI Bill. He saw it as a great opportunity after the war.

In the case of Manuel and Margaret Silva, for some reason Margaret recognized how important education was, and she was the driving force to have the boys educated. And my father's sister Shirley, who married Ed Silva, married a young man who went to Boston College. Manuel couldn't afford to have him board. So he took the train to Boston College every day and back. And Ed was an ROTC student. He had served his time on duty in Oklahoma for a few years. And then General Electric hired him. He ended up retiring as Vice President in General Electric. So there's a nice Portuguese boy from Lowell. His family did very, very well. There are just so many families that did so well.

A: Yah. Now when your grandparents got married, they got married at St. Anthony's, or?

P: I'm going to guess, no one ever spoke of it, but my grandmother was Centralville. So that would be St. Michael's.

A: Okay.

P: Because it was customary to marry in the girl's church.

A: Okay.

P: And she would have been in St. Michael's parish in Centralville.

A: Now you said your grandfather was friendly with Father deSilva?

P: deSilva.

A: deSilva.

P: deSilva, yah.

A: Okay. What do you know about the Father?

P: Father deSilva? (A: Yah) I, you know, I heard he was a man who could have a gruff manner, but it did not reflect the kind man he was beneath. He was extremely, extremely kind to those in need. I thought, I think he was thought very well of by the Portuguese Community. And one time he was looking for donations to help the church. And my grandfather, this is after, long after my grandmother had passed away from gall bladder surgery that she didn't survive. It was so dangerous at the time.

A: How old was she when she passed?

P: Well she was thirty-six, and my grandfather was thirty-eight, seven kids.

A: Wow.

P: But years after she died Father deSilva was looking for people to donate and help the church. And my grandfather donated two confessionals in my grandmother's memory.

A: Okay.

P: To St. Anthony's Church.

A: Now did he, he didn't go to church though. (P: No) Did he go Christmas, or?

P: I think it fell off as his family became adults. And that happened with a lot of people.

A: So after your grandparents got married did they go, like did your father go to church?

P: Yah. The family was, because the mother was very Irish Catholic.

A: And where did they go to church then?

P: Sacred Heart.

A: Sacred Heart.

P: That would have been the Sacred Heart Parish.

A: On Marriner Street.

P: On Marriner Street. Marriner Street, Boston Road area was still considered the Sacred Heart Parish. A little further out, but it was part of the parish.

A: Okay, all right. So your father went to like First Communion there and that kind of stuff.

P: Oh yah. That's right.

A: Okay, very good. What else about your grandfather and Portuguese connections?

P: Well he used to (--) He did go to the Holy Ghost Fairs. He did go to such activities. And my father said he never spoke Portuguese at home, because he didn't see the point. He was business minded and he didn't see where it was relevant to business. But when my father went with him to Holy Ghost Fairs and celebrations he said it surprised me to hear him switch right into Portuguese and be jabbering away with the old timers. And he said I'd take a double-take and say, "My God, listen to him." And then he'd swap right, switch right back into English. And you know, my father would ask him, "Well why don't we hear you say that?" He said, "Because I'm a businessman. Everybody I do business with speaks English." And so you know, what's the point? It was just that straight-forward practicality to his mind. There wasn't a lot of emphasis then about how oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if you spoke two or three languages. Well you know, you can argue it would be wonderful to learn as much as possible, but there are only so many hours in the day and there's just so much knowledge that's relevant for your subsistence. And I guess that's how he looked at it.

A: Yah, yah. Must have had Portuguese customers though for the business?

P: Oh all kinds, all kinds. Yah, he had Portuguese customers. He had all ethnicities, actually a lot of Greeks. I taught school with a Greek woman, she's still a good friend of mine. She came over here when she was about fourteen, twelve. Was she twelve? No, maybe about fourteen and oh she said it was awful. She didn't speak a word of English. It took her a few years to really get confident, but she said every Saturday her mother, who spoke no English would take her to Santos and Sons. And she would have a note, and she said, I'd be the one that would have to translate and tell them what we wanted. And I got better the more I practiced. And she did end up becoming a teacher. She still has a heavy accent, but you know, she taught with me in the same building for oh God, over twenty years.

A: And the Greeks had a lot of restaurants right?

P: There you go. So that's another reason why. My father was very good friends with the Tatsios Brothers near City Hall. He went to high school with the Tatsios Brothers, and he was especially friendly with Johnny Tatsios. So he had a lot of Greek friends. A matter of fact there are a lot of people who thought because of the sound of Santos, and he had a heavy head of black hair, and they thought he was Greek and obviously not. But no, he seemed to be mingling with Greek guys all the time.

A: So did he try to pass when it was time to make a sale?

P: [Both laugh] I don't think, I don't think it got that bad.

A: What else did I want to ask? Were there Portuguese restaurants back in the day?

P: Let me think about that. Oh, I'd have to think. I'd have to think hard about that. I do not remember a Portuguese restaurant in Lowell. My father loved, well the old timers called it [couve] Portuguese soup, also called Caldo Verde, Caldo soup, Verde green, because of the kale in it. And I make it. I have a recipe for it. And I mean Portuguese people think it's very delicious. If you're not Portuguese it's a matter of you love it or you don't. It's just kind of, it's a very ethnic dish, but now it's in all these yuppie Boston restaurants. That's what happens. If you wanted that and you were Portuguese, you had to make your own at home, or you could count on getting it at Portuguese fairs, festivals, church dinners, but I know my father would kind of yearn for it and if he couldn't get it from my grandfather he had to wait for the (--) My mother didn't make it. So he had to hope for you know, the next Holy Ghost Festival and he could get it there. No, I can't remember growing up with a Portuguese restaurant around.

A: Okay, yah, I don't think there was. No one has ever talked about it. So.

P: No, you'd get the food at the fair.

A: Which is interesting in itself that phenomenon, you know, because all of the other ethnic groups all had restaurants, (P: That's right) you know.

P: Yah, well I think the Portuguese when you think about what they did, okay, to make a living, a lot of physical labor, blue collar labor. A lot of heavy work construction, or wallpaper, paint, a lot of physical things. I remember a guy I taught with who works summers in Prince Macaroni just to get some extra money, was telling me he worked with a lot of Portuguese guys. He said, "God, those guys don't even take a lunch break." He said, "They are dynamos. They're like energizer bunnies on batteries," but very, very into manual labor and yah. Not restaurants though

A: Were there any Portuguese professionals when, you know, like when your father was young?

P: You know I don't remember because it was, it was still the generation of the blue collar work. And as I said, at that time there was a mindset if your father or your uncle established a business,

and there were a lot of businesses, tailors, there were a lot of Portuguese tailors. If they established a business then what's the problem that you don't want to go into the business and do the same thing? And then the thinking changed. As I said, in the case of my Uncle Ed Silva, my uncle because he married my father's sister Shirley ending up vice president of General Electric out in Ohio, the push came from his mother. She just had a different philosophy and persuaded her husband to be receptive to the idea that the kids be college educated.

A: So your grandmother died when she was thirty-six. (P: Yup) How old were the youngest kids at that point, still pretty young right?

P: Oh yah, like you're talking about five and three.

A: So real young, okay.

P: Yah, Shirley and Freddie. Freddie was the youngest.

A: Okay. So how did your grandfather deal with that death?

P: Well again, there's a lot of coming together. Emotionally my father said he saw very little of him, and people told me he was emotionally devastated. He was just so emotionally devastated. And my Aunt Rita Farley, you know, my grandfather's wife Mary Farley, that would have been one of her youngest sisters, she actually moved in with the family and helped cook, housework. The older kids helped with household chores. I remember my father saying one of my jobs was washing the kitchen floor, and he named a few other chores. He said whoever got up in the morning first put the coffee on, and they delegated. And the older ones had jobs involving looking after the younger ones. I mean they all had to answer to my grandfather. He was the guy in charge, but he had to run a very demanding business as well. Then my aunt, my grandfather's sister Margaret, my Aunt Margaret Santos Houde, she was extremely involved with the family, did an awful lot for the family. Was very, very close, there were only two girls in the family and five boys, and she was quite close with the girls looking after them. I remember my Aunt Shirley talking about how Margaret went with her for her prom gown and her wedding gown. And so there was a lot of coming together. Good, good people, good people and they just came together and helped one another to get through it all. Yah, yup.

A: So your father graduated high school. (P: Yes) And what year would he have graduated?

P: Well let me see. He died (--)

A: He was born in [19]24?

P: I think it was [19]23. He was born in 1923. I think 1940 [year of his high school graduation], because when he died in 1990 he was working on the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion, high school reunion. So do the subtraction you get 1940. Ray Sullivan was Principal.

A: Yah, Ray Sullivan. I worked with his son Brendan Sullivan. Do you know Brendan?

P: No, no.

A: He was a great guy. He worked at the Park Service.

P: My father thought a lot of Ray Sullivan.

A: Yah! So your father graduates high school, but during high school working at the business?

P: Yes.

A: Okay. And just went right into the business after high school right?

P: No, after high school he got it in his head, he got a brainstorm that he wanted to learn welding. I guess some guys told him you could make a whole lot of money as a welder in the Charlestown Navy Yard. So he asked my grandfather if he could borrow money to take a welding course. And my grandfather wasn't easy that way, and so he set up terms, and I mean there's no way you wouldn't pay him back on terms. So my father paid him back for the course and he went to Charlestown Navy Yard every day with a bunch of guys. But it was (--) He was making great money but it was taking over his life. He had no life of his own, and he was a young man trying to date my mother and he wasn't seeing her and he didn't like that. So finally he decided to shift back to working for his father short term. And then you know, war escalated and he was young. He said I was young and stupid, and I let some Marines take me out to dinner and talk me in to signing up. [Laughs] He said, "They could spot a pigeon." They were very good at spotting a pigeon, he said, and I think I was popping feathers in the next thing you know I was signing up. He said, and before I knew it I was in an historic invasion, liberation day invasion of Guam, he said, with explorations and mortar shells and oh god. And I probably told you how he was thrown up in the air, slammed down and was paralyzed from the waist down, spinal shock. They sent him to Honolulu for rehab. He didn't know if he'd walk again, but he managed to come out of it. But all his life he had terrible problems with his back, terrible migraines from concussion. But he was on a lot of islands. He turned twenty-one on Guadalcanal and went through a lot, really went through a lot during the war. And he taught my father how to make chili con carne.

A: No kidding

P: He made great chili. But he loved that. That was the best part in the Marines. And then he said he remembers the Marines sending him home to Boston by train cross country. He said I couldn't believe how beautiful a country was at that time. I just couldn't believe what I was seeing out the train window. He said it made me think of what I was fighting for. It was so beautiful. It was before we tore up the country with highways and everything. More strip malls, multiple unit housing and it was just (--)

A: But this is what population will bring though.

P: You're right, you're right, it's sad but true.

A: So tell us about your father came home and went back to work for your grandfather.

P: Yes he did running the business.

A: Okay.

P: The business end. He went, he got involved with the GI Loan and he took advantage of the Northeastern University Coop Program and it was perfect for him, because when it was time to work he worked managing the administrative part of his father's offices. And he would do that for a couple of weeks, and then he would take the train into Boston to Northeastern for a couple of weeks, and the depot was just across from Santos and Sons. So it was also very conveniently located, especially where both my parents lived in the housing near the Holy Trinity Greek Church. Everything was just so very close and so very walkable.

And he worked managing. He was the guy in the suit all the time, because of running the business end of the whole operation. But he and my mother talked about times changing and the economy changing, not for the better, the security, the lack of to continue doing what he was doing. He was also very involved with local politics at the time, a lot of contacts, lot of people. He was also involved with the Kennedy's at that time. They were just getting started after the war.

A: Yah, so before he helped out the Kennedys, did he help other candidates in the city?

P: Jim O'Day [James L. O'Day from Lowell, served as District Attorney for Middlesex County] running for District Attorney. He was treasurer of Jim O'Day's campaign, the District Attorney. He was very close with Jim O'Day.

A: And how did they know each other?

P: They lived in the housing, the Veterans Housing together near the Holy Trinity Greek Church, the brick Veterans Housing.

A: Okay.

P: Matter of fact when Jim had to be out on campaign or some other business and needed his wife to be with him my father would babysit his boys. He'd just go over and say, "I'll mind the boys, you take off with Carol." And they were just very close. They were both Marines. Jim, brilliant man, was actually a Japanese interpreter. And he went to both Notre Dame and Harvard and had a law degree. And he was just an absolutely brilliant man.

A: And he should have been governor.

P: Yah, he should have been.

A: But, [laughs] [unclear].

P: But, and you know, well you know the strange thing is the morality of the times. Now we have a president [Donald Trump] who is married to wife number three with multiple relationships before, in between, who knows his future, and he gets elected president with his, I'm trying to be kind, his insensitive language, okay. Now I'm not saying what Jim O'Day did was right [O'Day's political career came to an end when news of an extra-marital affair was leaked to the press], because it hurt his boys, his family, his wife, but it's a drop in the ocean compared with what goes on today. And the public lost an incredibly effective public servant. And the Kennedys loved him. As a matter of fact they were, my father said they were priming him for governor. They were looking at him before Teddy. Teddy was still in the background. Jim came before Teddy.

A: And how did Jimmy O'Day know the Kennedys? Any idea?

P: He was a politician. It's kind of through the network thing; Democrat, Irish Catholic politician, status.

A: I know there was some, there was some familial connection because we did it for the exhibit with the Gargan Family who lived in Belvidere. They were related to the Kennedys.

P: Yah, they were cousins. They were cousins to the Kennedys.

A: Do you think there was a connection there for Jimmy?

P: It could have been. It could have been, because you know, Jim had, he was in with the heavy rollers in the city, especially the Irish Catholic democrat faction. You know, it's not, it's not a big stretch really to think of how, how he got involved, but just being a very affective participant in the campaigns you know, was a foot in the door. And the *Lowell Sun* when it did that commemorative page, you know, on the anniversary of JFK's assassination and Dad was in a photo with JFK at the Knights of Columbus. The story that the SUN carried, and I refer to the Kennedy library, the Kennedy library covers this story in an oral interview by my father, but my father was, it appeared in this article my father was asked exactly what made him want to support this unknown young political figure John F. Kennedy. And he said, "Well I have to say, you know, I went through a lot in the Marine Corps during World War II serving the country, and when I read about this young man, not just his impressive credentials, educational credentials, but he was from a very wealthy family with a powerful father who could have gotten him out of all of this, but he went and put himself in danger like the rest of us." He said, "That caught my attention early on, because I had been there and I really admired that." He said, "That was the first thing that hooked me, and then the more I heard about how much they stood for the everyday guy, the working guy, I got that much more in his square, and I knew this is the kind of person I wanted to work for." And also my father was a social butterfly. He just loved mingling with interesting people and it offered him all of that.

A: Yah. Did your father do any outreach to the Portuguese community for these political campaigns, whether Jimmy or JFK, or?

P: To run for JFK? I meant to support JFK I mean to say while he was running?



A: Yah, or Jimmy?

P: Um, he, I don't know if he reached for any specific group of people. Nothing stands out as a specific reach.

A: Okay. Do you know by chance, this is a whacky question, but you may know about it, JFK in the late [19]50s sponsored legislation to allow a group of Portuguese immigrants come because of the volcano?

P: Yes, correct. Yes.

A: Do you know any stories connected to Lowell about that?

P: I have picked up enough drift to know that my father was in contact with Father deSilva. Father deSilva used to contact my father for different things. Not just Father deSilva, there were other priests in Lowell who would go to him because they knew he had contacts, he could help. And my father was involved helping people in the community. A lot of, he didn't you know, publicize a lot that he did, but there was reason to believe that because he was so very connected particularly to Ted. He was connected to John, but more so Ted. There's reason to believe that there was a contact there where Father deSilva asked him to see what he could do on behalf of the next wave that would be allowed in. Yah, kind of a liaison contact.

A: Do you ever hear of the person name Firmo Correa?

P: No.

A: Okay, he was one of these Portuguese guys that was kind of one of the godfathers of the community. You know, he would have been twenty years older than your dad, or something like that.

P: Umhm. Yah, I'm sure if dad were here today he'd probably say yes I know this guy. You know, when you mentioned about did he reach out specifically to the Portuguese community to support JFK, I think I'm safe in saying the Portuguese community is a Democratic community, okay. I mean just from my experience with the people and the way they think. And I talked with a few during George W's [Bush] administration and they were not thrilled with what he was all about. And they seemed to honor John Kennedy and that sort of thing. I think, I just think it's sort of a given that they would support a Democrat.

A: Umhm, umhm. So tell us the nature of the business from fifties into the sixties for Santos and Sons.

P: Yah, I think they were very good business years. Oh I left out another excellent customer they had were the Chinese, Chinese Restaurants.

A: Oh really?

P: And probably their best customer, the old Cathay Garden on the Lowell-Lawrence Boulevard, Frank Chin. And his daughter Theresa married a gentleman name Bob Lu, and they set up the Silver Dragon in Methuen. (A: Okay) And my father said they would settle for nothing but the best. Top quality everything. And I will never forget when we were on Marriner Street one Christmas Eve my father, my grandfather called my father. He said, you've got to take the truck into Boston and do this errand, and come back with, we don't have the super quality pork strips that they're looking for. You have to go get them in such and such a place. And my mother was livid. She was livid! My father said, "I've got to do this. We're talking Frank Chin. You should see the check he writes us every month. You don't say know to Frank Chin." And they didn't plan well with New Years and everything. They just, whoever planned at the Cathay Garden botched, but they expected my grandfather to make good. And Frank had no trouble telling him that he was, "I know I'm an excellent customer. You do get that and I want it," and they did it. And that's how they kept it, yah. No, the Chinese people were superb customers.

But I'm sorry I sidetracked from your question.

A: No, no, that was a great story. Just was the business continuing to be good [19]50s into [19]60s?

P: Yes! Yes, that's where I sidetracked. I was thinking of what was good about the business. The Chinese, particularly the Cathay Gardens, Silver Dragon, they, they certainly were wonderful. And yah, business was very, very good. And I think if you want to line it up with Presidents, we remember the Nixon administration with the long gas lines in the [19]70s, and the Ayatollah, and (--)

A: The inflation.

P: And the inflation. That is the spot where the business struggled and it's because it was affecting all kinds of restaurants in the area that weren't paying their bills, and they were pulling out, and just (--)

A: Did they sell? Did your family sell the business at one point, or did you close it?

P: What they, they closed it down. They turned the slaughter house over to my Uncle Kenny. (A: Okay) He had a house right on the same street. And they turned it over to him because they all needed employment once they sold, you know, once they got out of the business.

A: What year did they close it roughly?

P: I have to think a second. I'm going to say, I'm going to say the later part of the [19]70s. Not 1980, but the later part of the [19]70s. (A: Okay) And so they sold the building. I believe it became, I don't know if it right away became the Geoffroy Cars, but I know that was there soon enough.

I remember my father getting, working to get jobs his brothers and he got, I know he got work for his brother Roger as a federal meat inspector. He got work for his brother Freddie working as a meat cutter, [at Fort] Devens, okay. Eddie, couple of different, I think he got him some work in one of the post offices. And then they decided that Kenny would be able to run the slaughter house for another meat company, which I couldn't tell you, but he ran that for a while. Then Kenny has some tough luck with health and had to let go of that. And that's kind of how it wound up. And my father was postmaster and went on with his own career.

A: So did your father do, obviously your father supported the Kennedys, and there was a nice bonus for him to get these benefits. Did he have a first federal position before he became postmaster of Lowell?

P: Yah, he worked for General Service Administration in Boston as the liaison officer. That was the job title, Liaison Officer, GSA.

A: And when did that job come?

P: That would have been (--)

A: After JFK elected or before?

P: I think a little after. (A: Okay) It was during Kennedy's administration. He certainly wasn't president for a whole long time, but it was while JFK was president he worked for GSA. And my mother didn't deal well with it because he had to travel a lot. He was away from home a lot. And it didn't sit well with her. She wasn't one that happy living that way.

So he started looking around at other possibilities, and some of his friends told him that there was going to be a turnover for the postmastership of Lowell.

A: Who was the (--) Was it Charlie Gallagher was the postmaster?

P: Yes, prior to him, prior to him, yup. So it, you know, he put in for that and he had very solid administrative background between running my grandfather's business, which boy, I'm telling you, talk about a ball of wax that thing, for all the problems they ran into. Oh my god it never ended. I can even remember one night as a kid seeing him come home drenched, soaking rain, and he and his brothers were out in the woods in Tewksbury because some burglars had stolen my grandfather's entire safe, and got it on to a truck, and they broke it open in the woods in Tewksbury. The cops located it. And my father, they got the cash, but my father was concerned about all the wet business papers out in the woods. And the business papers were very important to them, contracts and this and that. So he and his brothers were out in the soaking (--) I don't know how many brothers. It could have been just one brother and poor dad, but they were all soaked and the muck and the mire gathering the papers up. And I mean the number of diverse miseries that went on with that job, and the things he had to be accountable for. He really, between the coop program at Northeastern [University], all the diverse problems that went with the meat business, the hard times, the helping his brothers out with jobs, working for General Service Administration, he really had quite a wealth of background and was a people person, you

know, just really thoroughly enjoyed people; got a lot of satisfaction out of making a difference with people's lives.

So you know, as a relative when you brag about your own, people are going to say you're prejudice. Well you're in good company. People are prejudice about your relatives, but at least you know, Daniel Patrick Moynihan who said, "Everyone is entitled to an opinion, but they're not entitled to their facts." I think I have facts to back my opinion. So, yah, he did, he had quite a lot of life's experience.

A: So when was your father sworn in as [Lowell] postmaster?

P: Let me see, 1967, (A: Okay) St. Patrick's Day. (A: Okay) And Ted Kennedy swore him in.

A: Okay.

P: And I'll never forget my, they didn't know it till the last minute, my parents made out all the invitations at home by hand and then my father got a call from Frank O'Connor's aide, Frank O'Connor who was an aide to Ted, and a good friend of my father, he said, "Charlie, you might want to order another set of invitations, Ted's coming to swear you in." You would not believe it. You would think it was a coronation. I wish you could have been a fly on the wall. They let kids out of school to attend. (A: Yah) You would not believe the masses, and it was in the Old Post Office near the Lowell Memorial Auditorium. It's the Brad Morse Building now.

A: Correct.

P: Okay.

A: Middlesex.

P: Yah. Well anyway, there he was on the staircase with Ted Kennedy giving a big speech about him. You know the Kennedy humor and charm, "On St. Patrick's Day it's my privilege to introduce to you Ruth Cassidy's husband," you know, in fine form. This was Ted all over. And then he told my father that he hoped it was a scandal-free administration, and by that I mean I don't want to hear that mail is getting delivered in Santos and Sons beef trucks. You know, he just, he made sure he got the drift to create the humor. But that's where we got the pictures. And I remember it snowed that day. Oh what a snowy St. Patrick's Day it was, but it was, it was amazing. It was just an amazing event. Being sworn in as a postmaster was a big deal back then. Lyndon Baines Johnson was president at the time. And I remember when my father got his big appointment certificate it was the Lyndon Baines Johnson signature at the bottom. So that would have been [19]67.

A: Good.

P: And then he continually got promotions. He was the only Lowell postmaster who was ever the Middlesex district manager. He kept going up the ranks. He was in a precarious situation. He didn't get into government until he was forty. So even though he made good money he

wasn't in it long enough to have a really secure retirement that would benefit my mother if something happen to him. So he felt a little extra pressure to keep advancing himself so that my mother would be secure should something happen to him.

So that's one of the things that got him looking for a promotion like Honolulu, [Hawaii], because it was so significant.

A: And the job in Honolulu was for what exactly?

P: He would have been District Manager Postmaster of the South Pacific, of not south, of the Pacific Area; District Manger Postmaster of the Pacific Area. So that meant the Hawaiian Islands, Guam, all those other. Actually, ironically he came full circle. They were the islands he was on when he was in combat in the Marine Corps. And they all full circle at the end of his life came under his jurisdiction at the Postmaster District Manager. (A: Chuckles) And what's kind of strange is when he came back from war one of the things he used to always talk about was how absolutely gorgeous the Pacific was. And he said, you know, it's my dream to return in peacetime. He never thought that those would be the circumstances. So it was just a funny, funny kind of thing the way it worked.

And then he and his friend Nick Tsapatsaris, who was a Marine as well, the two of them went (-- )

A: Pete. Pete ah (--)

P: Oh Nick was his son. Peter. Peter Tsapatsaris.

A: Peter. Peter, "Red" they called him.

P: "Red" Tsapatsaris, you're right. Nick was his son. He and Mr. Tsapatsaris went to I think it was the 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Liberation of Guam. The Governor put the Marines, the returning Marines on floats in parades. They spoke to all these young Marines who were in these great big gathering places. He said, "Oh my god, it reminded you of one of these old Roman films where the conquerors who returned were worshipped." He said, "It was an incredible experience." Now you know that happened the year before he died. And I always thanked God that he had that before he left the earth. That was quite a gift before he departed.

A: That's good. Well Pat, any final thoughts or stories about your, the Portuguese side of your family?

P: Um, I think they're a community that the city rightfully should be proud of. It's a great generalization, but I don't think it's inappropriate. I think in a quiet way they're not egotistical, they don't show off, the don't brag, but I think they recognize the goodness within their own community. They're people of values. They see the values amongst themselves. They know it, they feel good about it. There's something very, very special about the community. Again, in the book *Comunidade* so many, there are so many pieces of information that seemed to confirm that. They're contributors. As a community they're not takers. They were not takers, they were

contributors. And frank, no nonsense, hard-working, family oriented, very supportive, not clannish, very receptive, very receptive to other kinds of people. I'm sure there are exceptions to the rule. You'll always find an exception to the rule. But I did find them very welcoming as long as they respected you as a person for all the things that mattered, and a lot of warmth without gushy sentimentality. I think that goes back to the practicality. But I just, I just always felt very, very, very fortunate to have had that part of the family. I love the Irish part of my family, but there was something a little extra special about the Portuguese part of the family.

One other thought I'll share. My mother's sisters, she was one of nine kids, five girls. One married a gentleman who was of French background, the rest Portuguese. And a lot of people thought that was kind of funny, all these Cassidy girls marrying Portuguese guys. But my grandmother who worked in the mill, okay, she was not an educated woman as so many people were not at that time; simple woman with a lot of sense. When she worked in the mills she had the opportunity to observe all kinds of people and she admired the Portuguese people. Knew they worked hard, close to family, had a lot of respect for them. So she really was very approving of her daughters marrying Portuguese men. She knew that good bread winners, good family men, she was fine with it. So I thought that was kind of interesting. Even she was not slotted into that little ethnic circle where they must marry Irish, not at all. It was about the person and she saw so much good in the community.

I read one time a book, St. Patrick's Cemetery, about a little incompatibility between the Irish and the French. I thought that that was kind of interesting considering how well the Irish and the Portuguese got along. They got along very well.

So I suppose you know, days can go on and I'd think of other little things, but these, these would be the things that come to mind first, yup.

A: Okay. Well this was great. Thanks again Pat.

P: And the values have stayed. I have to say the values have stayed as the generations have gone on. Thank you!

**Interview ends**